DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 455 176 SO 032 883

AUTHOR	Pearson, Frances C.; Collins, William R.
TITLE	Senior Student Affairs Officers' Perceptions of Campus-Based Student Religious Organizations.
PUB DATE	2001-03-00
NOTE	20p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (83rd, Seattle, WA, March 17-21, 2001).
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Higher Education; Public Colleges; *Religious Organizations; *Student Organizations; Student Personnel Workers; *Student Recruitment
IDENTIFIERS	Administrator Surveys; *Campus Ministry; Research Suggestions

ABSTRACT

A survey was conducted of 174 senior student affairs officers (SSAOs) at public institutions in the United States concerning their perceptions of the role of campus-based student religious organizations (CbSROs) in the recruitment and retention of students. Eighty-three surveys were returned. In general, the SSAOs perceived campus-based religious organizations as moderately important in the recruitment and retention activities on their campuses. Results showed that CbSROs are more involved in recruiting activities at small schools than at large schools. The paper recommends further research on the role of campus ministries in student recruitment, satisfaction, success, and retention. Contains 2 tables and 29 references. (Author/BT)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

SO

ED 455 176

SENIOR STUDENT AFFAIRS OFFICERS' PERCEPTIONS OF CAMPUS-BASED STUDENT RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS

Frances C. Pearson, Northwestern State University

William R. Collins, Northwestern State University

SO 032 883

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Frances C. Pearson

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

A survey was conducted of 174 senior student affairs officers (SSAO's) at public institutions in the United States concerning their perceptions of the role of campus-based student religious organizations (CbSROs) in the recruitment and retention of students. In general, the SSAO's perceiveed them as moderately important in the recruitment and retention activities on their campuses. The results showed that CbSROs are more involved in recruiting activities at small schools than at large schools.

Senior Student Affairs Officer's Perceptions of

Campus-based Student Religious Organizations

Recent research has shown that religion is important to many students. A 1988 Gallop poll indicated that 80% of 18-24 year olds rated religion as "fairly important" or "very important" in their lives and more than a decade of national polling has revealed that faith is more important in the lives of students today than in previous years (Woodruff, 1997). Nevertheless, religous activities at public institutions are frequently the responsibility of Campus-based Student Religious Organizations (CbSROs), which may or may not be well integrated with the rest of the campus. Usually these organizations are under the umbrella of student activities (Komives & Woodward, 1996).

Astin (1993) and Kuh, Schuh, Whitt and Associates (1994) stressed the importance of student involvement in campus life to the recruitment, retention, and satisfaction of students, but no research has been conducted on the role that CbSRO's play in that process. Therefore, this study was undertaken to determine how SSAO's at public institutions perceive the impact of CbSRO's on the recruitment and retention of students.

Review of Literature

Student Involvement

Student involvement in campus life has been shown to have a positive effect on many student outcomes (Astin,1975, 1985, 1988, 1993; Hernandez, Hogan, Hathaway, & Lovell, 1999; Kuh, Schuh, Whitt & Associates, 1991; Love & Talbot, 1999; Moore, Lovell, McGann, & Wyrick, 1998; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Tinto, 1987). According to Tinto (1987), students who have positive encounters with the formal and informal academic and social systems will be better integrated into the institution and will be more likely to remain in school. Similarly, Astin (1975, 1985) felt that the intensity of exposure of students to the total environment of the institution greatly affects student outcomes. He defined intensity of exposure as "the amount of

physical and psychological energy devoted to the academic experience" (1985, p. 134), including spending time on campus, participating in student organizations, and interacting with faculty. In What Matters in College? Four Critical Years Revisited, Astin (1993) demonstrated that involvement with peers and faculty, in class and out of class, is important to the development of personality, values, career choices, academic success, and overall satisfaction with the collegiate experience.

One way that students get involved in campus life is through student organizations. As Astin (1993) noted, the most important influence on students in the college environment is the peer group, especially peers that are met in student organizations. His research has demonstrated the importance of involvement in sororities and fraternities, student government, residence life, athletics, and other clubs and organizations. Altbach (1993) pointed out that student organizations have a significant effect on student attitudes and values. Other research has underscored the importance of student organizations in the recruitment and retention of students, student satisfaction, leadership development, and the building of campus community (Kuh, et al, 1991; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Tinto, 1987). Kuh, et al (1991) found that out-of-class experiences, including participation in religious organizations, contribute significantly to the total education of students.

Student Recruitment and Retention

What entices students to enroll at a university is difficult to measure (Chapman, 1981). Astin (1975) identified tuition, institutional size, and the students' perception of whether they will succeed academically as important factors in recruitment. According to Hardin (1992), a number of studies have shown students choose a college based on the following four factors: (1) the quality of the academic program; (2) the social climate, including the availability of social groups and athletic programs; (3) the cost of attendance and location of the institution; and (4) the advice of authority figures and friends.

Retention is a major problem on college campuses because many students leave before completing a degree and it is costly for institutions to be constantly recruiting new students (Webb, 1987). Less than 15 percent of students leave because of academic dismissal; most leave voluntarily (Tinto, 1987), but the factors which cause students to leave are not clear (Astin, 1975). Both Tinto (1987) and Astin believed that retention is enhanced when students have positive relationships with their peers and faculty. The relationships contribute to their integration and involvement in the campus community, and, ultimately, their decision to stay. Students' first experiences with college are critical. If they are not woven into the fabric of the university during the first term, they are more likely to drop out. Therefore, the out-of-class programs and services which are provided by student affairs are essential to student retention (Webb, 1987). It is critical that students have opportunities to get involved in student organizations and leisure activities, and receive the attention and care they need when they are new to campus (Spann & Calderwood, 1998).

There is very little research on the impact of Campus-based Religious Organizations (CsBROs) on recruitment and retention of students, but it has been shown that students at religious colleges will persist if there is a good fit between their beliefs and the campus (Astin, 1985). Some research shows that students, as well as parents, are concerned about whether religious opportunities exist at public institutions as well (Butler, 1989). Therefore, when welcoming students to campus, it is important to inform them of the opportunities for spiritual growth provided by religious organizations. Temkins & Evans (1998) and Butler argued that student religious organizations should be an integral part of the campus culture and participants in the recruiting processes and orientation to the campus. They suggest that student affairs staff and members of religious organizations work together on recruiting activities and orientation classes.

Campus-based Religious Organizations

Campus-based student religious groups did not exist in early American universities because there was not a sharp distinction between secular and theological learning (Hofstadler & Smith, 1961). As Young (1997) noted,

> Grooming the good used to be a daily ritual in American colleges. The character of the students was formed through required courses, academic lectures, daily chapel, and strict codes of conduct. A course on moral philosophy integrated and gave religious purpose to the senior's entire course of study. Graduation depended on the student's Christian comportment as well as his grades. (p. 140)

The distinction between the secular and the spiritual on college campuses resulted from many factors: the increase in public institutions (Young, 1997); the increased emphasis on research (Rudolph, 1962); and the concern in the courts about separation of church and state (Fidler, Poster, & Strickland, 1999; Pavela, 1996; Temkins & Evans, 1998). According to Laurence (1999) the secularization of colleges and universities was a response to religious diversity in the United States and the increased emphasis on providing a utilitarian education. Young (1997) noted that spiritual well-being has been peripheral to the mission of public institutions in the past century because spiritual needs are difficult to reconcile with the academy.

Student Christian Associations arose on campuses in the United States after the American Civil War. They were the predecessors of the modern campus ministry movement and were organized to meet the needs of the whole student. In some respects, modern student affairs programs are rooted in these associations (Gustafson, 1997). While tolerated by the universities, they were primarily off-campus groups and were not well integrated into the activities of the campuses. Their rise provided an opportunity for the organization of on-campus religious organizations of various denominations. The first modern campus-based student religious groups came into being in the 1920's (Sanford, 1997). While the number of student religious organizations has increased in recent years, the proportion of students who participate is unknown (Levine, 1993). Data released from the National Student Ministries (1996) showed that almost a

quarter of a million students are involved in the five largest Campus-based Student Religious Organizations.

Presently, there appears to be a uniform approach to religious programming at educational institutions. Most campuses provide the opportunity to form religious organizations and they are generally overseen by the student affairs division (Komives & Woodard, 1996). Although they are permitted on public campuses, student affairs administrators seem reluctant to expose their institutions to litigation involving church and state (Fidler, Poster, & Strickland, 1999). State universities cannot hinder the free exercise of religion, but the recognition of student religious groups borders on the promotion of religion by the government, so they are usually not well integrated into the fabric of the campus.

Many authors believe that there should be an increased emphasis on the spiritual development of college students since it is an integral part of overall development and is often ignored on college campuses (Temkin & Evans, 1998; Young, 1997). Furthermore, involvement in religious activities appears to benefit students in many ways. For example, research has shown that religion is important to the overall adjustment of students to college life (Low & Handal, 1995) and has a positive effect on emotional health, developing a meaningful philosophy of life, cultural awareness, and satisfaction with support services in the college environment (Astin, 1993).

It has been suggested that spiritual development of students can be enhanced by making campus ministries a more integral part of the college campus. As Temkin and Evans (1998) suggested, student affairs staff should work with campus ministries on recruitment and orientation activities. Butler (1989) proposed that cooperative efforts be developed between CbSROs and residential life in order to reach a broader audience. He also recommended that student affairs staff be on ministry boards and that religious professionals be invited to participate in student affairs committees.

Method

Design

This study used a survey to collect information on SSAOs perceptions of campus-based student religious organizations. In particular, the study was designed to answer the following questions: 1) To what extent do the SSAOs perceive that CbSROs help with recruitment of students? 2) To what extent do the SSAOs perceive that CbSROs help with retention of students? 3) Is there a difference in SSAOs' perception by length of time of service? 4) Is there a difference in SSAOs' perception by size of institution?

Population and Sample

The participants in this study were senior student affairs officers at 174 randomly selected state universities in the United States. No private or religious controlled institutions were included. The list was developed through the internet and a table of random numbers was used for the final selection

Instrument

The survey was developed by the researcher and consisted of 48 questions about SSAOs' attitudes and perceptions of campus-based student religious organizations. It was developed in consultation with student affairs professionals. A pilot test was conducted by giving it to several student affairs professionals at a medium sized public institution in the south. Modifications and clarifications were made based upon their recommendations.

The demographic questions asked for the respondents' title, number of years in service, number of years in present position, campus size, and number of CbSROs on campus. The rest of the questions were measured on a 5-point likert scale, with 1 being "Strongly Disagree" and 5 being "Strongly Agree". The first section, questions 1 - 6, asked the SSAOs' perceptions of the degree to which CbSROs are involved in recruiting. For example, question 6 asked them to indicate whether CbSROs assist with senior days, campus tours, orientation, or contacting prospective freshmen through churches or promotional materials. Other questions in this section asked whether CbSROs were partners in the recruiting process, whether the institution had studied the role of CbSROs, and whether religious preferences of students were considered in recruiting.

The second section focused on the perception of the role CbSROS play in student retention. The questions asked whether involvement in CbROs helps in retaining students, whether at-risk students are referred to CbSROs, whether CbSROs are involved with freshman orientation , and whether CbROs network with various offices on campus.

Procedures

The instrument was mailed to the SSAOs during the Fall of 1999. A cover letter which described the study, asked for their participation, and outlined informed consent was included in the envelope. Anonymity was assured because no questions were asked which would identify respondents and all postmarks on returned envelopes were destroyed. There was only one mailing of the instrument.

Analysis

Means, standard deviations, and analyses of variance were calculated for each question. Analyses of variance were conducted by size of the institution and by number of years of service of the participants. For size of institution, there were 5 categories based on enrollment: less than 2000, 2000 to 5000, 5,000 to 10,000, 10,000 to 20,000, and over 20,000. Years of service were broken into 0 to 10 years, 11 to 20 years, 21 to 30 years, and over 30 years. The significance level was set at .05 and Scheffe tests were run on questions which showed significance.

Results

Eighty-three surveys were returned and, of those, two were discarded because they were not filled out by the SSAO. Of the respondents, 63 percent had been working in the field for twenty years or more, but over half (58%) had been in their current position for less than 5 years. Most (88.9%) of them were from institutions with over 5,000 students and over half (54%) were from institutions with over 10,000 students.

Table one shows the means and standard deviations for all of the questions related to recruitment. An examination of Table 1 shows that most of the responses were in the mid-range of the scale or lower, which indicates the respondents didn't feel strongly about many of the issues. It

appears that CbSROs are used for recruiting mostly in summer orientation programs (m=3.09), though that score was not high. The rest of the questions were below the midpoint on the scale. They disagreed that religious preferences of prospective students were considered in the recruiting process (m=1.46), and that their institution has studied the role of CbSROs in assisting with recruitment (m = 2.00). When analyses of variance were run on the questions by years of service, no significant differences were found.

Insert Table One About Here

Table two shows the means and standard deviations for all of the questions related to retention. The respondents agreed fairly strongly that student involvement in campus organizations in general positively affects retention (m=4.59). The contribution to retention efforts by CbSROs seems to be through freshman orientation programs (m=3.23), and networking with student activities (m = 4.19), counseling centers (m = 3.29), and residential life m = 3.19). The rest of the questions were below the midpoint on the scale. When analyses of variance were run for all questions by years of service, there were no significant differences.

Insert Table Two About Here

When analyses of variance were run on all questions by size of institution, significant differences were found for only two questions. Table three shows the analyses of variance by size of institution for Question 2.6a , CbSRO inclusion in senior day programs (f=5.5340, 4 df, p=.0006), and 2.6b, CbSROs inclusion in campus tours (f=3.6932, 4 df, p=.0086). The post hoc tests showed that CbSROs were more likely to participate in senior day programs at campuses with enrollments of 5,000 to 10,000 (m=1.933) than at campuses with enrollments above 20,000

(m=1.90). Institutions with 5,000 to 10,000 students were also more likely to include CbSROs on campus tours (m=3.05) than those with over 20,000 (m=1.80).

Insert Table Three About Here

Discussion

Limitations

As with any survey, the results of this study need to be interpreted in light of the limitations of the study. One limitation was that the survey instrument was designed by the researcher, so there is no information on its reliability and validity. The results were dependent upon the interpretation of the questions by the respondents and their honesty in answering. It is also possible that the SSAOs' involvement with CbSROs would vary by the size of the institution, the way their organization is structured, and their previous student affairs experience. Their knowledge and attitudes would vary accordingly. Additionally, no records were kept on the distribution of the respondents by geographical region of the country which could be a significant factor in how CsBROs are perceived.

Discussion

The literature suggests that student involvement in organizations is important in the recruitment and retention of students, and the SSAOs in this study seemed to agree with that. But, they did not have strong opinions about the role of Campus-based Student Religious Organizations in that process. They agreed that involvement in organizations had a positive affect on retention, but did not express strong opinions about the role of CbSROs. CbSROS seemed to be included in the process more at smaller institutions, if at all. Very little assessment of the role of CbSROs in recruitment and retention seems to be taking place on college campuses.

It was interesting that the SSAOs did not perceive the CbSROs to be active participants in senior days or campus tours when students are being recruited to campus. If it is true that students

and parents are interested in religious opportunities, it seems that more importance should be placed on making them aware of the opportunities that exist. Likewise, the campuses did not seem to use CbSROs to recruit students directly or through their churches to any great extent and CbROs promotional materials weren't used extensively for recruiting. It appears that some of these activities took place, but it is conceivable that CbSROs could take a much more active role in recruiting efforts. The fact that religious preferences are not considered in the recruiting process is probably not surprising given that the SSAOs who participated in this study were at public institutions.

The SSAOs did not perceive CbSROs as being highly integrated with all parts of the college campus. They seem to be involved with freshman orientation programs and to interact with student activities, counseling centers and residential life, but they had nominal contact with other offices on campus. The areas where they are active are similar to the ones Butler (1989) recommended. It is surprising they aren't more closely networked with offices where they might be of assistance such as university police, health services, judicial affairs, and admissions. Likewise, it is interesting that the SSAOs do not perceive them as an important resource for at-risk students. Campus ministries can provide a supportive environment for students. Since there has been an increase in student involvement in student religious organizations in recent years, it is surprising they aren't more integrated into the campus culture.

Recommendations

Based upon the literature and the results of this study, it seems that student affairs needs to take a more active role in studying and promoting the spiritual development of students. One way this can be done is by making CbSROs or campus ministries a more integral part of the campus community. It seems like an important first step would be to invite them to student affairs staff meetings so they can begin to network with various offices and develop cooperative relationships.

Very little research has been done on the role of campus ministries in student recruitment, satisfaction, success, and retention. In fact, most of the research on student involvement has not

examined the specific role that these organizations play. Further research needs to be done on how they are integrated on college campuses and the effects they have on student outcomes.

References

Altbach, P. G. (1993). Students: Interests, culture, and activism. In A. Levine (Ed.). Higher Learning in America, 1980-2000. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Astin, A. W. (1975). Preventing students from dropping out. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Astin, A. W. (1985). Achieving Educational Excellence. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Astin, A. W. (1988). Four critical years. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Astin, A. W. (1993). What matters in college? Four critical years revisited. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Butler, J. (Ed.). (1989). Religion and relationships on campus. In J. Butler (Ed.). Religion on campus. (New Directions for Student Services, No. 46, pp. 47-57). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.Chapman, D. W. (1981) A model of student college choice. Journal of Higher Education, 52, 490-505.

Fidler, P., Poster, J., & Strickland. (1999). Extra hands for tough times, utilizing campus ministers for student development in public institutions. College Student Affairs Journal, 18, 16-26.

Gallop Poll (1988). Church/synagogue membership. The Gallop Report. Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources.

Gustafson, S. M. (1997). Campus ministry in the 21st century. The Campus Minister, 19, 45-54.

Hardin, J. H. (1992). Louisiana high school seniors: The university selection process. An unpublished thesis. Northwestern State University, Natchitoches, Louisiana.

Hernandez, K., Hogan, S., Hathaway, C., & Lovell, C. D. (1999). Analysis of the literature on the impact of student involvement on student development and learning: More questions than answers. NASPA Journal, 36, 184 -197.

Hofstadler, R., & Smith, W. (1961). American higher education: A documentary history. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Komives, S. & Woodward, D. (1996). Student services: a handbook for the profession. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Kuh, G., Schuh, J., & Whitt, E. (1991). Involving colleges. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Levine, A. (1993). Higher learning in America, 1980-2000. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins.

Love, P., & Talbot, D. (1999). Defining spiritual development: A missing consideration for student affairs. NASPA Journal, 37, 361-375.

Low, C. & Handal, P. (1995). The relationship between religion and adjustment to college. Journal of College Student Development, 26, 406-412.

Moore, J., Lovell, C. D., McGann, T., & Wyrick, J. (1998). College Student Affairs Journal, 17, 4-17.

National Student Ministries. (1996). Campus based student religious organizations. Report of the National Student Ministries.

Pascarella, E. T., & Terenzini, P. T. (1991). How college affects students: Findings and insights from twenty years of research. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Pavela, G. (1996). Does religion have a role in the campus marketplace of ideas? SYNTHESIS: Law and Policy in Higher Education, 8, 565-569.

Rudolph, F. (1962). The american college and university. New York: Vintage Books.

Sanford, S. (1997). Baptist campus ministry at crossroads. Franklin, TN: Providence House.

Spann, M., & Calderwood, B. (1998). Increasing student success. Journal of Developmental Education, 22, 16-39.

Temkin, L., & Evans, N. J. (1998). Religion on campus: Suggestions for cooperation between student affairs and campus-based religious organizations. NASPA Journal, 36, 61-69.

Tinto, V. (1987). Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Webb, E. (1987) Retention and excellence through student involvement: A leadership role for student affairs. NASPA Journal, 24, 6-11.

Woodruff, M. (1997). Overheard, xers and the church. Ivy Jungle Report, 5, 2.

Young, R. B. (1997). No neutral ground. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Table 1. Means and Standard Deviations by Question - Recruitment

	Question	Mean	S.D.
2.1	I consider CbSROs to be partners in the institution's recruitment process.	2.79	1.18
2.2	The institution has studied the role of CbSROs in assisting with the recruiting of new students.	2.00	1.01
2.3	CbSROS could potentially be involved in recruiting new students for the institution through churches & high school religious groups	3.41	1.13
2.4.	Religious preferences of prospective students are considered in the recruiting process.	1.46	.98
2.5	The religious or spiritual aspects of a prospective student can play a role in the student's decision to attend the institution	3.60	.91
2.6.	CbSROs are active participants in the institution's recruiting process by:		
	a. participating in senior days	2.34	1.22
	b. being included on campus tours	2.31	1.18
	c. contacting prospective freshmen	2.23	1.17
	d. participating in freshman summer orientation programs	3.09	1.30
	e. promoting the institution through their churches or other connections	2.80	1.22
	f. producing their own promotional material for the institution's recruiters to use.	2.30	1.18

Table 2. Means and Standard Deviations by Question - Retention

	Question	Mean	S.D.
3.1.	Student involvement in campus organizations positively affects retention of students.	4.59	.81
3.2	The institution has studied the role of CbSROs in retaining students.	2.19	1.03
3.3	At-risk students with a religious preference are referred to corresponding CbSROs.	2.45	1.10
3.4	CbSROs are involved in or included in the freshman orientation program.	3.23	1.30
3.5.	CbSROs are networked with the following Student Affairs offices:		
	a. Student Activities	4.19	.96
	b. University police	2.40	1.18
	c. Counseling Center	3.29	1.31
	d. Greek Affairs	2.68	1.32
	e. Minority Affairs Office	2.86	1.24
	f. Health Services	2.65	1.29
	g. Recreational and Leisure Sports	2.64	1.31
	h. International Student Affairs	2.99	1.24
	i. Judicial Affairs	2.32	1.16
	j. Residential Life	3.19	1.38
	k. Career Services	2.31	1.05
	l. Admissions	2.40	1.12
	m. Financial Aid	2.12	1.01

Table 2. Means and Standard Deviations by Question - Retention

Question	Mean	S.D.

Table 3. Analyses of Variance for Questions 2.6a and 2.6b by Size of Institution

Question	Source	df	SS	MS	f	p
2.6a	Between groups	4	28.5049	7.1262	5.534	.0006 *
	Within groups	72	92.7159	1.2877		
	Total	76	121.2208			
2.6b	Between groups	4	19.1460	4.7890	3.693	.0086 *
	Within groups	72	93.3635	1.2967		
	Total	76	112.5195			